Journal Entry #1

Auriana Anderson

October 24, 2011

Pages 1-44

Summary: The novel I am reading is called Midaq Alley by Naguib Mahfouz. This section consists of constant character and setting development. The setting takes place in Cairo, Egypt in a diminutive town where everyone knows each other by name. The town, Midaq Alley is secluded from the outside world. Throughout this section the author discusses the characters and shows their role amongst the environment. The main characters are Abba, Umm Hamida, Saniya Afify, Hamida, Jaada, Husniya, Mrs. Kirsha, Kirsha, Uncle Kamil, Salim Alwan, Dr. Booshy, Sanker, Sheikh Darwish, and Radwan Hussainy, The responsibility of most of the women is to be the house keeper. The women that do not work perform house held jobs such as cooking and cleaning as well as taking care of the children. Some of the men are disrespectful and bossy, while others are kind and considerate. The overall job being portrayed is the care giver. The men take care of everything and demonstrate the gain of power. All in all, each and every character was a strong believer of a single God. So far in the novel, nothing profligate occurred. The characters are being introduced to the reader and Abba is setting off to pursue Hamida as his girlfriend, but fails.

Analysis: During this part of the book, I felt on edge because there were a lot of characters to focus on and it was a bit difficult to comprehend. There were many words that I did not understand. I also found it odd the way the characters spoke, reacted to things and the wardrobe selection. The characters wore cloaks and rode on horses. I enjoyed the setting so far because I could imagine what it looked like through the content of the story. It greatly reminded me of a scene a movie called “The Prince of Egypt.” So far the section included sophisticated ideas. “It’s walls decorated with multicolored arabesques, now crumbling, giving off strong odors from the medicines of olden times, smells which have now become the spices and folk cures of today and tomorrow…” This is a strong quote of the intense description that is pulled out within the text.

Application: What inherent characteristics span time and culture?

The inherent characteristics that spanned time so far are the amount of work ethic, morals/values, relationships with others and life after death. The men of the town showed a great amount of work ethic and never failed to do so. Every man has a special role in the society. “The barbershop, although small, is considered in the alley to be rather special.” The section then began to explain the value of the shop, and how the barber took pride in himself. The relationships with each of the characters were very questionable. A few of the town’s people were stuck up and lied to get what they wanted. Hamida was a beautiful woman and took the people around her for granted. She only searched for a man of wealth. “The truth was she neither loved him nor wanted him; at the same time she could not dismiss him.”

Having a higher power to believe in and life after death took a large toll in the section. “We are all sons of Adam. If poverty descends on you then seek help from your brother. Man’s provider is God and it is to God that any excess is due.” All of the examples and ideas are large portions of the development of the characters in their culture and time.

Journal Entry #2

Auriana Anderson

October 24, 2011

Pages 45-80

Summary: At the beginning of this section, a larger amount of information on Mr. Kirsha is revealed. He is a café owner who illegally buys and sells hashish. He spoke about his love for it and says that God is okay with him using it. Mr. Kirsha feels as if it is the only thing that keeps him together. On the other hand, Mr. Kirsha has ways that are unacceptable. He is attracted to young boys. “Mr. Kirsha smiled, or rather his mouth split open mechanically; this was accompanied by a slight twitching of his eyebrows.” Mr. Kirsha later watch the young boy then followed him to make conversation. As they were conversing, Mr. Kirsha asked the boy where he lived and invited him to stop by his café. “Will you come?” He was very excited and insisted the young boy show up.

Later another character is introduced. His name is Zaita and lives outside of the bakery. Zaita is a crazy man that people go to when they feel that all hope is lost. His job is to operate on people to make them crippled so they can have pity. Those people are named the beggars. Zaita is one who is not liked because of his odor. He does not wash or groom himself. He is very poor, but the beggars look up to him.

A person that most people look up to is a new character named Salim Alwan, the wealthy businessman. Salim has a wife and two sons and is very successful. He recently survived a heart attack, so he has great pride in himself, his family and his business. One thing about him that is disappointing is that he is looking for a new wife; a younger wife.

Analysis: I honestly do not like how this novel introduces so many characters. It is hard to understand and remember who is who. I have also noticed that the chapters don’t transition. They just go from one topic to the next without comparison. So when I have to summarize what I read, it doesn’t flow or relate. I am not into this book at all.

Application: What inherent human characteristics span time and culture?

In this section, the characteristics that were present were greed, self esteem, and need for wealth. Salim Alwan is a man that has everything he could ask for. He is doing very well with is business, his health and his family. He doesn’t need anything more, but he yearns for Hamida. He wants to take her hand in marriage because she is young and beautiful. He is being very greedy and inconsiderate on his wife. For example, the text states “The desire of a fifty-year-old man, a husband and father, for a girl in her twenties.” This is showing the lack of appreciation for his wife. As far as self esteem goes, the beggars of the story have no pride or honor. They immediately resort to feeling pity. “I am never successful at a job. I have tried all kinds of work, even being a beggar. My luck is bad and my mind is worse. I can never understand or remember anything.” This man has a very low self esteem and doesn’t feel as if he is worth anything. In the life of the Midaq Alley, money means a lot to people, though many of them do not have much of it. The people believe that with more money, there are less worries.